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Pulpit Preaching

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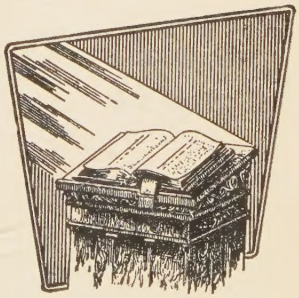

A LENTEN-EASTER SAMPLER

The following materials are from **Lenten-Easter Sourcebook,** edited by Charles L. Wallis and published recently by Abingdon Press, Nashville 2, Tennessee.

* * * *

Every true life has its Jerusalem, to which it is always going up. A life cannot be really considered as having begun to live until that far-off city in which its destiny awaits it, where its work is to be done, where its problem is to be solved, begins to draw the life towards itself, and the life begins to know and own the summons. Very strange is this quality of our human nature which decrees that unless we feel a future before us we do not live completely in the present where we stand today. We have grown so used to it that we do not realize how strange it is. It seems to us to be necessary. But the lower natures, the beasts, do not seem to have anything like it. And we can easily picture to ourselves a human nature which might have been created so that it never should think about the future, but should get all its inspiration out of present things. But that is not our human nature. It always must look forward. The thing which it hopes to become is already a power and decides the thing it is.

And so every true life has its Jerusalem to which it is always going up. At first far off and dimly seen, laying but light hold upon our purpose and our will, then gradually taking us more and more into its power, compelling our study, directing the current of our thoughts, arranging our friendships for us, deciding for us what powers we shall bring out into use, deciding for us what we shall be: so every live man's Jerusalem, his sacred city, calls to him from the hill-top where it stands.

Phillips Brooks

* * * *

Picture Jerusalem on that Sunday morning, densely crowded for the Passover. Every house was full and every street was thronged; there were tens of thousands gathered there. And it was when our Lord, turning the crest of Olivet, saw before him that so crowded city, that like summer tempest came his tears. Tears for the one; tears for the twice ten thousand: how typical is that of the Redeemer! Never was there a compassion so discriminative, and never a compassion so inclusive. Our separate sorrows—he understands them all, and our hours of solitary anguish by the grave; but not less the problem of the crowd. There are men who are full of sympathy for personal sorrows, but have never heard the crying of the multitude. There are men who hear the crying of the multitude, but have never been broken-hearted at the tomb. Christ has room for all, and room for each. He loves the world with a divine compassion.

George H. Morrison

* * * *

When He makes Triumphal Entry into a heart He redeems it from pettiness of self-expression and guides to the fulness of self-realization, bringing an abundance of life and peace. When he comes into a home, impatience gives way to loving kindness, love drives out tyranny and fear, and fret-

(Continued on page 30)

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THE WAY TO EASTER

WHO IS THIS?

Wesley P. Ford, Central Christian Church, Pasadena, California

The caravan to Jerusalem was reaching its destination. Riding on an ass, the symbol of a peaceful mission, the leader was coming down the hill directly toward the city gate. Many in the city were down-trodden subjects of the rule of Rome. A rumor had spread that here was one of their own to lead their bid for freedom. They cut branches and spread their garments shouting, "Blessed be He who comes in the name of the Lord." It was a most unusual greeting and as he entered Jerusalem, all the city was saying, "Who is this?"

There was confusion about the answer to this question. On Sunday they said, "He is the Son of David, the King." But by Monday and Tuesday they were less certain. He was unconventional. He disturbed profitable routine as he cleansed the temple, and moved among them as one set on some high purpose. When they realized he could not be cast in the conventional role of a king, they turned against him, and by Friday treated him as a common criminal. He who had risen above the level of society was pushed into the line-up with those who had fallen below. They shouted him down, tortured him, and nailed him to a cross between two thieves. On Sunday they hailed him; on Friday they nailed him. Who is this? They did not know.

In ignorance they jeered, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." They laughed, not knowing it was true. Would that we could understand the far reaching consequences of what we say or do in ignorance. Olive Shriner, in a story about a dog, points vividly this fact. Towser was a little terrier. He wanted only to love and do good. Other dogs laughed at him. Love was so impractical. Towser found a newsboy who looked lonely. He sought to befriend him and the boy, ignorant of the little dog's motive, sent him rolling down the street with a kick. Undaunted Towser befriended a woman who lived alone. She welcomed him as he wandered into her yard. He was happy in being a companion until one day the veterinarian came, bringing another dog and saying, "Your dog is well now." Soon Towser learned he was both unwelcome and unwanted.

Lonely and wanting someone to love, he strolled along a path through a forest on the edge of town. Ahead of him was a boy with a bag of groceries. As the boy passed a clump of trees a man stepped out from behind, attacked him, beat him, and started to run with the groceries. Towser was quick to say, "Here I can help!" He ran barking and biting until the attacker fled. The boy got up, bruised but not seriously injured. His groceries were scattered but saved. He saw Towser for the first time and said, "Your master got away, but I've still got you." With a club he beat Towser so severely that the little dog died.

Unwillingness to seek another's motive or to try to understand is sin. It is back of pride and prejudice. Not understanding that he sought to do them good, they treated Jesus like a criminal and put him to death as a friendless, lonely man. Strengthened

by the impact of the resurrection a few of his followers continued his mission. A thorough effort was organized to put them out of business. Allegiance to him was a crime punishable by death. His followers were imprisoned, tortured and killed. But in spite of his crucifixion and a planned effort to put his followers out of business, he remains the most influential man in the twentieth century. Who is this?

I

Without directly answering the question, look further at the facts. The greatest compliment that can be paid to any man today is that he is Christlike. Jesus acted only with the welfare of others in mind. They condemned him saying that he acted like a god. He did. God is love. God is good. They accused him of healing a man on the Sabbath. They never accused him of hurting a man on the Sabbath, or any other day.

He acted like a god and "he spoke as one having authority" — not the authority of political power, but the authority of a heart of love. When others condemned, he said, "Go and sin no more." There was a judgment in what he said, but it was the judgment born of God's goodness and love. Clemenceau, after the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919, directed a scornful sneer at Woodrow Wilson saying, "He spoke like Jesus Christ." Another with keen insight remarked, "Ah, if he only had!" To act and to speak like Jesus Christ remains the world's hope.

II

His way is complimentary and, second, something profound happens in the lives of those who sincerely seek to follow him. On one occasion Jesus met a demon-possessed man who lived among the tombs. He was a miserable sight. In Jesus' visit something happened. People went out to see. They found the man "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind." Allegiance to this Jesus brings one to his right mind.

John Paton, missionary to the New Hebrides, wrote of a native, Abraham, saying, "That man had been a cannibal in his heathen days, but by the grace of God he stood a new creature in Jesus Christ." He continues, "When I hear the shallow objections of irreligious scribblers hinting that there is no reality in conversion, my heart yearns to plant them for just one week on this island, seeing the "natural" men all around, and the one . . . converted Abraham." Who is this? Take a look at men before and after their encounter with Jesus Christ.

III

Third, because some have followed him, something has happened to all. We are bound up together in the bundle of life. When a few reach for the heights, all, even those on the lower rungs, share the impact. Because some have followed him, society has risen to a higher plane. We no longer destroy unwanted children. Homes are established on the pattern of love. We walk the streets free from fear. Who has done this? Jesus once healed a man but the man who had been healed did not know who it was. This is the role of millions.

When told by a parent, "We are not interested in the church" I want to ask, "Do you know the history of your own home? Do you know that the ideal of one husband and one wife living in love is related to the progressive revelation and realization of the fact of one God and that God is love?" Often we seem not to know the source of our richest blessings. "When I am lifted up, I will draw all men." This is the magnanimous fact! On the cross Jesus was lifting those who drove the nails. We are debtors. The loyalty of some lifts all.

Who is this? Proof, as the laboratory knows proof, is lacking. Thomas doubted until he felt his Master's hands; then he said, "My Lord and my God." We want proof like that. If we could touch his hand, if we could for a moment see God! Why

doesn't something tremendous happen to make us sure?

But something tremendous has happened. Jesus said, "If you abide in my word you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." To abide in his word is to take the journey by faith, as we take each new day. We never see tomorrow. We plan the adventure, trusting. Those who have taken the Christian adventure, beginning where they are, have found both faith and power. The larger faith and greater power are possessed by those who dare to begin. Help for one's unbelief is found in the journey, not in waiting. To wait for all the answers is to miss the journey, and to miss the journey is to miss the power. Great faith follows great living. This is the tremendous evidence.

One other word. If you do not take this journey, you will take another. To wait is to be pushed. Each will follow a leader of his choosing or he will be pushed by the crowd, often into second rate conduct that he does not want. "Would you also go away?" Jesus asked. And Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" It is everyone's question. Who is this?

THE OPPOSITION TO JESUS

Nenien C. McPherson, Jr., Grace Methodist Church, Dayton, Ohio

Scripture Lesson: Luke 19:28-48

"And day after day he taught them in the Temple, while the High Priests and the Scribes were devising some means of destroying Him, as were also the leading men of the people. But they could not find any way of doing it, for the people all hung upon his words."

Jesus had many friends and followers beyond the Twelve. Reading the Fourth Gospel, one gets the impression that there was hostility between Jesus and the Jews throughout his ministry, but John's Gospel is reflecting the strife between Jews and Christians at the end of the first century and is stressing the fact that the Jewish nation had rejected him as the Messiah. The earlier Gospels make it quite clear that Jesus was tremendously popular with the people as a whole, that crowds listened to him day after day and that "the people all hung upon his words." We must remember that the first Christians were all Jews and that many of them had been members of the party of the Pharisees.

The hirelings of the High Priests and revolutionaries, men sympathetic to the point of view of the Zealots, made up the crowd that demanded the release of Bar-Abbas, doubtless a revolutionary himself, and cried out: "Crucify Jesus! Crucify him!"

Despite his popularity with the crowds, however, Jesus had enemies. There were a number of individuals who "sought means to destroy him." A man is judged by the enemies he makes as well as by his friends. No one could be neutral toward Jesus: you were for him or against him. He was a strong, virile personality who stood for something and was in dead earnest about carrying out the Father's will.

The mass of the Jewish people belonged to no party or group. Many were of the "great unwashed"—sinners, outcasts and tax-collectors—who were careless about the traditions or who were contaminated by their contact with Gentiles in the occupations they pursued. Not all the men who opposed Jesus were evil men. In fact, it is a false distinction to make: we cannot divide men into the good and the bad, representing the two classes by colors, the white and the black; all of us are some shade of gray and many of us are a dusty gray. The men who opposed Jesus were the religious and commercial leaders of the people,

the super-patriots who hated to live under the domination of Rome, and the Roman officials who were indifferent to the issues within Judaism and merely carried out what they understood to be their duty. Bertrand Russell has a book the title of which indicates the situation here: "The Harm Good Men Do."

Who were the enemies of Jesus? What groups opposed him?

I

The Sadducees and High Priests were the aristocrats of Jesus' day. They were the conservatives in theology, accepting only the Torah (first five books of the Old Testament) as the revealed will of God, rejecting the traditions and the writings of the Prophets and the third section of our Old Testament known as the Writings. They had vested commercial interests also. It was this group that derived profit from the sale of the "perfect" animals for the sacrifices in the Temple. They were the ecclesiastical authorities, concerned about maintaining the religious institution unchanged. They were afraid, therefore, for what Jesus might do to the institution and their privileged positions. Jesus' cleansing of the Temple placed him on the side of the Prophets who, while not opposed to the sacrificial system of worship, rated strict observance of ritual and sacrifice as of no value except when accompanied by a right inner spirit of sincerity and a loyalty to the "more important matters of the Law," justice and mercy and humility.

Caiaphas, the High Priest, was concerned for the church of his day. William Blake, the English mystical poet, describes him thus:

> "Caiaphas was in his own mind
> A benefactor to mankind,
> And read the Bible day and night."

He was very "religious" and was greatly alarmed when it was reported to him that Jesus had said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God." So he decided it was better for one man to die than that organized religion should be endangered.

Caiaphas is still with us: he will crucify any man who takes Christ seriously and attempts to mold his attitudes and responses in harmony with that spirit which was in Jesus or who wants the Church to accept men as equals without regard to race or color or class or who advocates real brotherhood or anything else that is new and different.

II

The Zealots were the super-patriots, the revolutionaries who believed in armed violence and resistance, who thought the end justified the means employed and that God would come to the rescue of his people and deliver them from the tyranny of Rome if only they would strike a blow against their enemy, Rome.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem, for he knew the Zealots would continue to use the one method in which they had faith, namely, armed revolution, and that eventually Rome would destroy the city in one of those revolts. History proved him right. Not one stone was left upon another when the city was finally destroyed in A.D. 70. They could not understand Jesus when he said: "Love your enemies . . . Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." Jesus taught that there was only one God who was the God of all peoples and this universalism was frightening to men who believed they were God's chosen ones, his people Israel.

Jesus, who had achieved much fame by his teaching and healing in Capernaum and around the Sea of Galilee, came back to his home town, Nazareth, early in his ministry. He went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day as was his custom and being the "home town boy," he was asked to read the scripture lesson and expound it. He read from the prophet Isaiah and proceeded to declare that the time of deliverance was at hand. The people heard him gladly and

were proud of him until he reminded them that there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah but that Elijah was sent to none of these but only to a non-Jewish woman. Likewise he reminded them there were many lepers in Israel in the days of Elisha but he healed none of these but only Naaman the Syrian. "When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath" (Luke 4:28). Their anger was so great that he had to slip out of the city to save his life.

Most of the Jews of Jesus' day expected the Messiah to be a military leader who would overthrow their enemies and set up again the Davidic kingdom. Many of Jesus' friends and disciples, even members of the Twelve, were Zealots. James and John were looking forward to the political kingdom in which they sought the chief places of authority alongside of Jesus, the political Messiah as they thought. Judas was very likely a Zealot and betrayed Jesus in order to force him to act, to begin the revolution against Rome. Judas was starved for results, for the deliverance of his people Israel. Robert Norwood, in "The Man of Kerioth," makes this clear in a dialogue between Jesus and Judas:

Jesus: "What must Messiah do?"
Judas: "Make water wine,
Stones bread; leap from a temple pinnacle;
Strike every mocking mouth with miracles;
Call lightning from the clouds, until the yoke
Upon our necks is broken and the land
Set free from Rome."
Jesus: "I too was tempted, friend,
By such a thought . . .
He who will lift earth to highest star
Must make his hands meet underneath the load."
Judas: "Do that, and men will nail
Your hands together. — Jesus, I know men—
You have dreamed over long
among your tools—
They are like horses to be tamed by bit
And bridle, ready to be rode when one
Has curbed them."
Jesus: "Men are all sons of God,
And God is love, and only love can speak
With love."
Judas: "Love will not save the world from Roman hate,
And we must groan beneath Tiberius
Until Messiah comes with miracles."

III

The Scribes, the lawyers, and the Pharisees were the most influential among the religious groups. Their exclusiveness and emphasis on the things that were distinctively Jewish had saved Judaism from being absorbed by foreign cultures or contaminated by the infiltration of foreign elements. Jesus was closer to the Pharisees than to any other group in his day. Yet the Pharisees were his most bitter enemies.

Jesus was the friend of the social outcasts and the tax-collectors. He not only taught that God was concerned about them but he demonstrated his concern by living with them and accepting them as equals in the sight of God. He accepted women as the equals of men, and this was the most revolutionary element in his teaching and behavior. The Pharisees realized that if one who was thought by the crowds to be a great religious teacher and leader should be allowed to advocate such a procedure then the exclusiveness of things Jewish would be destroyed.

Jesus stressed the inwardness of religion and tended to disregard the external rules and lived by principles that would destroy all that separated Jews and Gentiles. A modern Jewish rabbi, Joseph Klausner, in "Jesus of Nazareth," sees clearly why the Scribes and Pharisees would oppose Jesus: "A religion which possesses only a certain conception of God and

a morality acceptable to all mankind, does not belong to any special nation, and, consciously or unconsciously, breaks down the barriers of nationality. This inevitably brought it to pass that his people, Israel, rejected him."

IV

The Roman officials were concerned to maintain law and order, to keep the Jews under control — while allowing them as much religious liberty as possible—and to prevent any threat of revolt against Roman authority. They had no concern for perculiar Jewish religious customs and no interest in the differences between Jewish groups. If Jesus were a trouble maker, he had to die; the facts did not matter as much as that the Jewish leaders were making the accusation.

V

Opposition came also from a group that should have understood him and supported him, his family and friends. All of the Twelve deserted him when the crisis reached its climax. His mother and brothers thought him a little mad and made an attempt to force him to return to his home town with them. Jesus once said, "A man's foes will be those of his own household" (Matthew 10:36). Our families often do not appreciate our new resolutions. They urge us to be sensible, not to be fanatical, not to make ourselves unpopular.

We oppose Jesus by toning down his ideas, making the gospel commonplace news instead of the radical "good news" that it is. We will follow him if it doesn't cost too much, if it requires little sacrifice on our part and no basic change in our outlook and status in life.

We may oppose him by keeping silent when we should take a stand. We keep silent because to speak out may hurt our business or lose us our friends. It takes courage to stand alone, to be different, not to conform to what those around us are saying and doing.

We sometimes oppose Jesus by praising him and bestowing upon him titles of honor that separate him from us and justify us in not taking his way of life. We stress the orthodoxy of our creeds and theological formulas and conform outwardly to the Christian standards without any real inner sincerity. In this case, we should hear him say: "Not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven." (Matthew 7:21).

The sixteenth century Dutch Pietist, Cornhert, expresses the necessity for sincerity in our commitment to the way of Christ in these words: "Christianity is not in the lip but in the life; it is not in the talk but in the walk." The question each of us should ask himself is, "Will we follow Him or oppose Him?"

PILATE'S WASH BOWL

Glenn E. Hanneman, First Baptist Church, Plainfield, New Jersey

Pilate was nervous. This man standing before him was not like anyone he had ever judged before. When a man stands in the presence of truth, something happens in the depths of his soul. Here, in the person of Jesus, was rightness. Pilate sensed it. It dominated him. And yet, he suppressed the very instinct of his soul, and rather than respond, called for the wash bowl. No wonder Jesus made him nervous.

Do we not often find ourselves standing in Pilate's shoes? Bernard Shaw once said, in his cynical way, "The devil gave man a mild injection of Christianity to immunize him against a more violent attack." After all, when our cloak of respectability is full of moral holes, when we recognize that acceptance of the wholeness of Christ may mean radical changes in our ethics, our attitudes, our social life, our business, without doubt, we

do find it more comfortable to keep Christ at his distance.

But this one thing is certain: The true way of life has been made flesh; God's way for man in the living spirit of Jesus Christ stands like a signpost at every compromise of principle, every selfish act of expediency, every unholy or lustful thought, every time of decision. It stands, plowed into life, as one man has put it, pointing the way to fulfillment; calling, deep unto deep. How long will we reach for the bowl?

I

Well, there are some important truths growing out of Pilate's experience which we might do well to ponder. Let's walk around the incident for a while. First of all, since Pilate's time human experience has proven that nothing is worth enough in this world to sacrifice our right relationship to God.

Judas would have agreed! The money for which he had sold his soul became so repulsive to him that he went and killed himself in shame. Peter would have understood, for his soul was rocked with remorse until he went back and witnessed for Christ. Not even life itself, he found, was important enough to lose that oneness with God. When people are faced with the basic realities of life they agree.

Why is it that a young sailor, facing the possibility of combat, will write and say that for the first time in his life he has been doing some serious thinking about its meaning, and has concluded that it is time to become a Christian in the real sense of the word? Why does a certain test pilot, flying higher and faster than any other man, turning and twisting his plane in the sky like some interplanetary roller-coaster, find that in the mere shadow of a second when the fate of his plane hangs in the balance, his life passes before him just as quickly, and he resolves to get right with God? Why? Because these men have realized that in the time for accounting, all else fades into insignificance except one's relationship to God!

I have the feeling that Pilate had such a premonition. Certainly he couldn't ignore the strange power Jesus seemed to hold over him. He felt drawn to him. Down underneath all the confusion and conflict of values kept ringing the warning that if he released this man, if he stood at his side, he would want a change in his basic attitudes, his government, and his home life. So, he tried to wash his hands of the whole thing and evade the issue, only to learn too late that nothing is important enough in this world for which to sacrifice your right relationship with God.

II

The second truth is this: Our place in history and our importance to mankind hinge not on our fame or fortune, or even our accomplishments, but finally, on our relationship to Jesus Christ. Most of us are so busy making a living that we neglect making a life. We become so engrossed in meeting and solving the everyday problems that we fail to note their significance in the total of things. And yet, everything we do, or think, or say, plays its part in the endless chain of human events.

But the fact that we are a part of the great drama of history tells only a portion of the story. The crucial issue centers around the kind of part we play. Jesus stands as a witness to the truth that a man, living in harmony with the will of God, can become an effective instrument for the creation of good.

When President Faunce was at Brown University he knew a somewhat wild and reckless boy who one day in the biological laboratory happened to see through the microscope those tiny creatures who before his very eyes passed through one generation after another. Suddenly, said President Faunce, the boy stood up and began saying to himself as he

walked around the room, "I see it now. I am a single link between the generations before me and those who may come after. I will not be a rotten link in that chain."

That young man caught a vision of eternity for a moment. People, of every age and walk of life, your question: What kind of a link are you forging for God? What do you stand for?

Well, Jesus stands forever as God's example of the spirit in which His children should live and move. He offers wholeness; fulfillment; salvation from the pride and seflishness and false values which so easily imprison us all. Will you accept his offer? or will you reach for the bowl? Your place in history, and your ultimate importance to mankind will depend on your answer.

III

Those who have accepted the offer have found a peace and power for living beyond understanding. It does not come by mere force of will, or by thinking success and victory. These are regularly tried and found wanting. Certainly it doesn't grow out of pride and self-sufficiency. They become so pitifully empty in the face of death. But look at the lives of the saints in your block who have faced death and bereavement and disappointment and heartache with a balance and a power that has caused wonder in your mind. Look at them and you will find the constant factor of a continuing commitment to God and His purposes through Christ.

Someone has said that "what every soul needs to learn is that it is in a constant battle." Then he adds, "But it is a battle which ought to be and may be a winning one." It has been written of Thomas Arnold, the great headmaster of Rugby School, that he preached in such a way that to every young boy who heard him there was brought home "for the first time the meaning of his life; that it was no fools or sluggards paradise into which he had wandered by chance, but a battlefield ordained from of old, where there are no spectators, but the youngest must take his side, and the stakes are life and death!" How wise to be aware of the choices and to stand on the side of life.

Men have been saying this since Jesus stood before Pilate because they have found it to be true. Look at the men and women who have stood like lighthouses in the midst of a stormy sea, steady, strong as a rock. It has been their inner qualities of faith and spirit which have made this possible. If we let life mainly develop from without, if we are discouraged in a discouraging world, bitter in an embittered world, pagan in a pagan world, then we do, indeed, belong to the congregation of the damned who have lost their souls. Those who have accepted the offer of God in Christ have been freed from the non-essentials which tie life up into knots, and have found a peace and a power and a purpose for living that truly passes understanding.

IV

King Edward VII of England and his queen were out walking one afternoon when suddenly the queen stumbled and seriously sprained her ankle. In great pain and leaning on her husband, she finally managed to reach the humble home of a cottager just as dusk was falling. The cottager and wife had already gone to bed. He shouted, "Who's there?" in response to the king's heavy pounding on the door, and when he heard the reply, "It is Edward, your king," he said, "Enough of your pranks now. Be off with you and let a man get his sleep." The king hesitated, but pounded again and said, "I tell you, it is the king. Let me in." Whereupon the cottager said, "I'll teach you to torment an honest man trying to get his sleep!" and threw open the door ready to pitch the intruder from the porch, only to see that it was, indeed, the king. Of course, he invited him in, and help was secured for the queen. Years later, when the cottager had grown old and company would come,

he would relive the experience, how on that wonderful night, the king came to his home. Gazing at a worn spot on the carpet, and in a voice touched with awe, he would say, "And to think, I almost didn't let him in! I almost didn't let him in!"

Jesus stands at the door of your life, not only knocking but calling to you. Will you answer the call, or reach again for the bowl?

MORE THAN A KING

Homer J. R. Elford, Trinity Methodist Church, Youngstown, Ohio

Today all Christendom joins in singing hymns of rejoicing. We try to catch the spirit of that throng who lined the streets of Jerusalem long ago to hail Jesus as King.

We call it Palm Sunday because the record tells us that as Jesus rode through the streets on His way from Bethany to the Temple the people tore branches from the palm trees and used them to pave the highway over which Jesus rode on the donkey. Some remind us that this was exactly the way the people often welcomed emperors and other rulers; it was the way, too, that they showed their respect for athletes returning from the Olympic games. While we must admit that the palm branches served this purpose best because of their size and texture, it is noteworthy that the palm tree and its branches still serve a very useful purpose wherever they are grown. The trees provide shade for the weary and food for the hungry. The branches are used for weaving baskets and thatching roofs. No wonder the palm is a symbol of victory, conquest, kingship, mastery and service.

Artists, poets, song writers, and preachers have died in an effort to capture and interpret this historic event. Try as we may, however, there are meanings in this Palm Sunday story which baffle our best insights. We appreciate what Lloyd Douglass was driving at when, in his book **The Robe,** he pictures Demetrius, the slave, pushing his way through the rejoicing Palm Sunday crowd that he might get a good look at Jesus. Later he was discussing the experience with another slave. The other asked, "See him—close up?" Demetrius nodded. "Crazy?" "No," "King?" "No," muttered Demetrius soberly, 'not a king." "What is he, then?" "I don't know," mumbled Demetrius in a puzzled voice, "but he is something more than a king." We are in a much better position than was Demetrius, or any of those there that day, to know how much more than a king Jesus really was. We know the deeper spiritual meaning of those lines in that great hymn, "Onward Christian Soldier," where we sing:

Crowns and thrones may perish,
Kingdoms rise and wane,
But the Church of Jesus, constant
will remain.

Later on we sing,

Onward, then, ye people, join our
happy throng,
Blend with ours your voices, in
the triumph song;
Glory, laud, and honor, unto
Christ the King,
This through countless ages, men
and angels sing.

We know that if Jesus had been only a king His name might now be forgotten and His kingdom, too, would have passed into oblivion along with those of so many other kings of this world. But because He was something more than a king we continue to give him glory, laud and honor.

The thing which has always given both mystery and challenge to our Palm Sunday observances is the fact that we stand at a vantage point in history from which we may see the place to which this triumphant parade leads. It doesn't stop at the Temple

where everyone expected Jesus to seat Himself on a throne to rule them after the fashion of earthly monarchs; it doesn't lead to Rome where they had hoped He would go and overthrow Caesar and then go on to conquer, by force of arms, all the kings of this world. It leads, rather, to a place just outside the Jerusalem city wall, a place called Golgotha, where, instead of being lifted up onto a throne, Jesus was raised up onto a cross.

It is on this account that the dominant symbol of our Christian faith is not a throne, but a cross, for it was by this cross that He won His right to be hailed as the King, the ruler, of all mankind. For this reason, too, we consider Palm Sunday as an appropriate time to face up to the meaning of the cross. We know that had there been no cross at the end of Jerusalem's street we would likely never have heard of the palms, and surely we would not be preparing to celebrate the triumphant Easter dawn.

Today there is scarcely a nation in the world where the Christian cross may not be found. It is true that it was not until the conversion of the Emperor Constantine the Great, in the year 313, that the cross became a common and openly used symbol of Christianity. But if we visit the ancient catacombs we will find this sign etched on the limestone walls. Sometimes it is the familiar form, even more often in this early period it was in the disguised form of a ship's mast or a man standing with arms outstretched in prayer.

It is of at least passing interest to note that the Crucifix, with the figure of Christ upon it, did not come into usage until well into the sixth century. So many of the early Christians were Jews and they felt that to make any likeness of Christ would be to disobey the commandment given to Moses, warning against making graven images. It is significant, however, that until the eleventh century the figure of Christ on the cross was not that of a dying man, but of a living, triumphant saviour.

Exactly why the artists and artisans were instructed by the church to cause the figure on the cross to display agony, we can only speculate. While we must never overlook the suffering which Jesus endured, nor allow ourselves to evade what that sacrificial act means for us in terms of bringing man and God together, how we need to emphasize that the cross is a symbol of heroic love, virility, stamina and triumph. It was partly on this account that during the Protestant Reformation all crosses were taken out of the churches and the place of prominence was given to the open Bible, a symbol of the Living Word of God to man. That is why Protestants choose to have an empty cross, symbolic of a Lord that triumphed over it and used the cross as a stepping stone to the eternal life which He entered and holds before all His followers as the crown of life.

Today the cross reminds us that at the center of our faith there is a Christ whom this instrument of torture could not kill. It is true that the physical part of this supreme revelation of God could be nailed down with spikes of iron, but it proved impossible to nail down His real life—His Spirit. In a real sense those spikes only let out the divine radiance of God in a manner which was to make such a deep and indelible impression on mankind that we could never escape its meaning.

What exactly is that meaning; what should the very sight of the cross bring to our minds and hearts?

I

First of all, we may be sure that it holds the same deep meaning today which it held that day when it was raised there on Golgotha. Then, today, and always the cross signifies that God loved men so much that He was willing to suffer the agonies of death to show the depths of that love.

At no point in all history have we a greater, clearer example of the dif-

ference between a God who is continually giving of Himself for men and the lesser, pagan deities which demand everything of men and give them nothing. It wasn't enough that God should breathe into man the breath of life; that He should endow man with the unique capacity to reason and to discover how to use the vast natural resources that his every physical need might be satisfied, nor was it enough that God should make it possible for men to be free to choose for themselves the good or the evil. He went further than that and sent them a perfect likeness of Himself who could not only teach us His truth, but embody it; not only tell of His way, but follow it; not only inspire us with His quality of life, but live it. And then in this mighty act on Calvary He showed His best by allowing free men to show their worst. Whenever we look at the cross we should remember that, and allow this supreme and best example of love to draw out of us our supreme and best love. That is what we should be trying to express when we sing,

Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.

II

Or again, the cross is an everlasting reminder that it is possible to find one great central fact which will draw all men away from their little, petty, selfish ways and commit them to something big enough to give them life abundant. When Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me," we wonder if even He imagined the long-range reality of that statement. We can be quite sure that the disciples didn't believe this was the way to accomplish the goal of bringing the kingdoms of this world into the kingdom of God. When He brought up the subject they all supported Peter when he objected saying, "It shall not be—I won't stand for it!" Whoever heard of winning the world by letting men put you to death? Had the disciples had their way Jesus would have done the very things which the Tempter suggested out there in the wilderness during that forty-day fast after the Baptism; He would have gained His followers by giving them security in the material realm, or amusing them with grandstand performances, and certainly by being the earthly monarch the very Scriptures foretold. But He chose rather to become the suffering servant, doing something so unselfish that to this day theologians are trying to find ways to fully explain it, even as I am trying now.

Speculate about it all you will, it is no longer a dream, but an historical fact. Napoleon is credited by some as saying, during his exile on St. Helena, as he looked back upon his life, that Alexander, Caesar and he had founded mighty empires upon force, and they had vanished; whereas Christ had built His upon love, and today millions would die for Him. From our point in time we could add to Napoleon's list and testimony the names of many other political leaders who should have taken this great fact into account.

What should strike deep at our hearts is the fact that this is not only true of world empires, but of personal lives. Any individual who builds his life on anything less than the Way, the Truth and the Life which was raised up on that cross long ago is bound ultimately to fall. It illustrates with inescapable clarity our Lord's parable of the men who built their houses on sand and on rock. Only those who hear His great truth as set forth in the Sermon on the Mount, and then set about to live it out in every day relationships, can hope to win the experience of happy, enduring life.

III

What is more, this way leads to real life for you and for me simply be-

cause it is a way for all men; not just for a select few. That must have been what someone had in mind when these lines were penned: "The cross of Christ leaps over barriers of sea and mountain, links centuries and civilizations by the certainty of its life-giving power." Whenever and wherever the cross has been raised, new life has sprung into being, fears and superstitions have eventually had to give way to faith and love. Why? Because the cross has become the universal symbol of sacrificial love; of outgoing concern, of compassion.

A very important part of this marvelous power of the cross lies in the fact that through all the long generations since that first cross was raised men have been inspired to take seriously the challenge of Jesus when He said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

Those who have really taken Jesus seriously; those who have been willing to stay around after Palm Sunday until Good Friday, and then on through Easter until Pentecost, have come to discover that the way of the cross is the only way that leads to a quality of life that can endure through time to eternity. Seeing how much Jesus was able to accomplish by His one solitary life in standing for God when all men, including His closest friends, thought it would have been easier to stand for Satan, men have been empowered to follow in His steps.

A legend has it that once when Peter was preaching a sermon it wasn't going too well. He may have faltered, wondering if he could possibly carry through in His high resolve to follow Christ even though it meant a cross for himself. And then he heard a rooster crowing and before his mind there flashed once again that dreadful day when he denied his Lord, and the sight of Jesus hanging upon His cross and then, according to the legend, Peter began to preach as he had never preached before. The cross has that strange power to bring the best out of us; to strengthen us in our high resolves to follow Christ all the way. Because we are willing to be led by His spirit and example, we, and the whole world, will one day be drawn to Him. That is the way the kingdom is going to come; not by might, not by power, but by this spirit of love which pours forth from the cross that we see standing today at the end of the street along which the jubilant multitudes hail Christ as King. That is why we can sing,

> Ride on, ride on in majesty,
> In lowly pomp ride on to die;
> Bow thy meek head to mortal pain,
> Then take, O God, thy power, and reign.

For we know that our Lord is not riding to His death at all, but to His immortal life.

WHAT THE CROSS MEANS TO ME

Charles L. Allen, First Methodist Church, Houston, Texas

There is a moving Negro spiritual which asks, "Were you there when they crucified my Lord?" That question doesn't seem strange to us. Suppose, however, it were asked concerning Socrates? "Were you there when Socrates drank the hemlock?" Of course you weren't there. That happened long before you were born.

But when you think of Calvary, it doesn't seem strange to think of yourself as being there. When Rembrandt painted the crucifixion, he showed part of the crowd. Study the faces in that crowd and you will find that one of them is Rembrandt himself. The great artist thought of himself as being there. So do we. In a deep sense, we are there. The Cross is not something in the dim, distant

past. We know we are part of what happened that day.

As I stand before the Cross, instead of trying to explain it, I feel I would just like to kneel before it in reverence and humility. I know something happened that day that is different from anything that has ever happened before or since. It belongs equally to every age. The hymn writer said, "In the Cross of Christ I glory, towering o'er the wrecks of time." Somehow we instinctively know that no matter what happens, the Cross will stand secure and unshaken.

When I was a little boy, there was a picture on a calendar that we kept hanging on the wall long after the calendar was used up. It showed a stormy sea. The sky was over-cast, lightning flashed, rain poured down. Rising above the savagely beating waves was a white towering Cross. In the water below was a desperate creature reaching out. Underneath were printed the words: "Simply to Thy Cross I cling." We can't explain it. We can and do cling to it through faith.

I

As I look at the Cross, the first truth I see there is the fact there are some things worse than death. Betrayal is worse than death. I see Jesus in Gethsemane. A young man of thirty-three, He doesn't want to die. There is so much more He wants to do in life. He could have saved Himself by becoming a coward or by compromising His principles. But to betray His faith, His standards, His ideals would for Him have been worse than death. That same night Judas became a betrayer. He gained some money, he saved his skin, but later he found he made a bad bargain. There are many people today who have learned what Judas learned. They would gladly swap what they have gained for a clear conscience. It is far better to let one's body die than to let the soul die.

As I see the Cross, I know life is a matter of quality instead of quantity. How long a person lives is not the most important thing about life. How much a person possesses, the honors and comforts he gains, the security he attains—none of those is important enough to give our souls for.

The Cross forever rebukes and destroys the proposition that the body is man's supreme possession. Jesus Himself said, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul" (Matthew 10:26). There is something to live for that is more important than the body. The Cross rebukes my self-centeredness.

II

As we stand by the Cross of Christ, we see history's most complete revelation of the love of God. Weatherhead tells of being on board a ship one dark night in the Mediterranean. They were passing near to Stromboli, the famous island volcano. Suddenly there was a great burst of flame from the volcano, lighting up the ocean for miles around. The darkness gave way to the flame of fire and then gradually the volcano subsided until it was again dark. What did it mean? It meant that for a few hours there had been revealed the fire that is continually burning in the heart of that mountain.

That is a fine illustration of the Cross. As we see Jesus there, think of His reasons for being there, recognize His dying to save lost humanity, see His spirit of redemptive forgiveness toward even those who put Him there, we realize that the Cross is a window through which we can see into the heart of God. The Cross reveals God's love toward each of us.

"I sometimes think about the Cross
—And shut my eyes, and try to see
—The cruel nails and crown of thorns
—And Jesus, Crucified for me—But even could I see him die—I could but see a little part—Of that great love, which like a fire—Is always burning in His heart."

In his book, "The Meaning of the

Cross," Dr. Maltby tells of a father who had a reprobate son. Again and again that father got his son out of trouble until finally the father felt forced to give up on the boy. He said, "I have had to wash my hands of him. What else could I do?" Well, whatever the complete opposite of "washing our hands" of one is, God did it on the Cross.

The Cross does not change God and it does not pay God off. Rather does it reveal His eternal attitude toward every man. John Donne, the seventeenth Century English preacher, pointed out that the best way to think of God's love is by thinking of a circle. He said, "A circle is endless; whom God loves, He loves to the end; and not only to their own end, to their death, but to His end." And we know that God is endless. Because God is what He is, I realize I am in the hands of a love that will never let me go. Neither will His love let me off. I may go on sinning, I may do cowardly and disappointing things, I may be less than my best and I may turn my back on His face, but God never "washes His hands of me." Like the shepherd, he seeks His lost sheep and keeps on seeking until He finds it.

Men hide from God, they refuse to face up to His claims upon their lives and they go on living day by day as if there were no God. But remember — the Cross is not some incident of ancient history. It is an everpresent experience over-shadowing the life of every man. It is eternal proof that God is after us. When any one of us looks honestly and clearly at the Cross, we kneel before it in adoration and surrender.

III

One of the problems t o d a y in atomic research is the disposal of atomic waste products. O n c e this strange power is created, it cannot be destroyed. It cannot be burned or thrown away, for even the waste of the atomic plants remains active and dangerous for thousands of years.

One day Calvary became a power plant. The power of God's eternal love was, in a very special way, released there that day. And from that day until this very moment, its power has been eminating into the lives of men. Men have run from it, fought it, belittled it, ignored it, but the power of the Cross has not been diminished.

As Jesus was hanging on Calvary, He looked into the face of God and said. "It is finished" (John 19:30). What was finished? His life? No. He meant that God had sent Him on earth for a particular and special purpose. Now on the Cross, that purpose was accomplished. Something was accomplished that day that had never been accomplished before and would never need to be done again—something once and for all time.

Some mighty deed was accomplished on the Cross. What that deed was, none of us can answer completely for it was in a higher realm than the natural man. It was in the realm of the supernatural. In some way that is beyond our limited understanding, our own sins—my sins, your sins—were dealt with on the Cross. The salvation of the human soul and the forgiveness of sins are connected in some peculiar way to the Cross of Christ. St. Paul said well: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ . . . To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:17-19).

On the Cross the door was opened between man and God. In some way, which is beyond our understanding, the Cross made a difference between man's relationship with God. In some way, my sins were dealt with that day and when I accept Christ as my Saviour, my sins no longer stand be-

tween my soul and God. I do not need to understand it. I need only to believe and by faith accept it. Why was the Cross necessary? The reason I cannot answer that is because my little mind is incapable of understanding the nature of God and the supernatural universe. The fact that Jesus died on the Cross is proof that it was necessary, and thus I know it is necessary for me by faith to claim the Cross and believe in it.

We remember Pilgrim in "The Pilgrim's Progress" struggling along with a heavy burden. Finally he came to Calvary, climbed that hill and knelt before that Cross. Then, and not until then, his burden rolled away and he became free of it and could continue his journey toward the City of God. I do not need to understand it. I only need to kneel before it. Millions can sing today, "At the Cross, where I first saw the light; and the burden of my heart rolled away." May it be so for each of us.

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who had a reprobate son. Ag
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The Cross does o many ways of and it does not p er. How are you? does it reveal His. Or there is that ward every ma What's new? But seventeenth Cer, a question which er, pointed ou closer to our concern think of God It is the query, What a circle. He ? whom God ur greetings, the early end; and would have liked this best. to their ple, there are words that are we knov the little letter we call I John God is would be a ready answer to in the ry question. For there we read, let m know that we have passed out me eath into life, because we love do brethren."

I This is the important word for all f us on an Easter Sunday morning. You see, for us, as for the writers of the New Testament, the resurrection truth has two sides. On one side it was an event, something that happened in and to Jesus Christ. We still are not certain exactly how the event came about. We only know that at a specific time in history, believers in Christ, who had been despairing and scattered, met him in a new way and became invincibly hopeful and inseparably together. There was the event.

But the other side, this truth is an experience. It isn't something that happened to Jesus Christ alone; it is something which because of him happens in us. In the New Testament those two things, the event, and the experience, are never separated. When a Christian says, I believe in the resurrection, he is saying both. We do not look upon the victory of Christ as something standing by itself. We look upon it as a promise of a victory that can come to us and to all who would receive the living Christ.

It is the resurrection as a personal experience which is my concern today. It was real for them, and the newness had certain marks. Can they be ours today?

I

Clearly, there was for one thing a new certainty. "We know," said the early Christians. A young man whose eyes had been opened by the touch of Christ answered his questioners, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I can see." You don't shake a certainty like that. Or Paul, coming to the close of his faithful years, could write, "I know Whom I have believed." That's a kind of certainty which gives firm foundation to life.

Our day has one kind of certainty. In almost every council where men sit down to discuss the affairs of the world today, there are men of startling certainty. They are usually committed to communism or to some way of life that believes in power and authority. Their very certainty gives them a sternness of countenance, a lack of humor, a manner of life which is one-directional and uncompromising. We are up against that kind of conviction. It is no time for Christians to be uncertain in their faith. The only hope we have is the recovery of our certainty in God which makes it possible for us to say in our way, We know.

A pastor tells of a day when a young man, fighting a tremendous moral battle, said to him, "I don't believe in God, but if you do, pray for me." So, they did pray. And the day came when the young man said to his pastor, "If you know anyone else who doesn't believe in God, send him to

EASTER — AND BEYOND

IT'S TRUE?

tlett, Colgate Rochester Divinity School, Rochester, N. Y.

me, because I do." I think he would have understood the word of the first Christians, "We know that we have passed out of death into life." It is this note of certainty which makes Easter morning such an occasion of joy for Christians everywhere.

II

But these Christians had found not only a new certainty, but obviously a new beginning. "We have passed out of death into life."

To some these may seem too vivid words for it. Isn't that exaggeration, "passed out of death into life?" We are a practical people. Isn't this more poetic than practical? Many people find it possible to live on the everyday level without getting too disturbed about it. What then is this business about passing out of death into life?

Let us bring it very close home and put it on a nearer level. It is deeply important to understand. So, let us see the sign of our need in less exaggerated ways. Some will find it in the hollowness of the social life they are leading. A modern educator, writing the story of his life, looked back upon years of social occasions, which seemed now to him to be gatherings of people who in his words "are searching for some vague miracle that will give their lives zest and meaning." Is this one of the reasons we Americans are so constantly on the move? Is this the search that prompts it? Or is there a certain frantic note in much of our good times? The pursuit of happiness is exactly the word for it, and often it is a frantic pursuit as though we are afraid to stop unless we might have to come face to face with ourselves and our emptiness.

These are not idle words, they are chosen. They seem to me descriptive of the life which as yet is unillumined and unclaimed by Jesus Christ.

But men have passed from death into life. Sometimes it is one resplendent hour never to be forgotten. Jerome Ellison, in a frank autobiography which tells of his long struggle, writes with moving simplicity of such a time. Addressing his words to God, he said, "Then there came the blessed night, the cold and rainy night in November all those years ago, and the meeting at the Y.M.C.A., when You reached down and freed me from the desire to drink. And to the moment I write this, You keep me free!" No need to argue with such a one that resurrection is more than an event. It is also an experience.

Yet, it need not be so dramatic. In one of the pulpits in Washington there is preaching a man who has told of a day in Scotland twenty-five years ago when he crossed the line into new life. He was twenty years of age, hurrying home from his work as he had many evenings before. At a certain corner in the City of Glasgow he realized that he had made a decision. He didn't even break his stride. No one passing would have known. Yet, he counts it the moment in which he turned a corner in his life. In that moment he knew that he was claimed for full-time Christian service, that he must prepare himself for the Christian ministry. It seems so simple, but it was a turning around, or in other words, a conversion. That could happen in this Easter service today. For God has opened the possibility, and the door has never been closed.

III

Finally, a new belonging is a part of the experience. "Because we love the brethren."

This makes you recall almost inevitably what Paul said to the early church. He said that they could speak with the tongues of men and angels but if they had no love, it was nothing. The words themselves are remarkable, but when you think it was Paul who said it, they are actually awesome. For they clearly disclosed the heart of a changed man. This was the same Paul, mind you, who once was persecuting men because they had differed from him in doctrine. This was the Paul who went out breathing threatenings. This was yes-

terday's fanatic become today's disciple! He believed in resurrection because he had experienced it. The evidence of a living Christ was right there—in love awakened by him in the hearts of men. From that day to this, that proof has been where every man could see and believe.

This is the kind of evidence by which we have to live in the most important things of our lives. This is true even in everyday things. This morning you may say that the sun is shining. But have you looked at it? Not really. You have only seen the light that comes from it. You realize that whereas a few hours ago, when night was upon us, you could not see, this morning all is clear because of a new illumination. Or perhaps you walked out and felt the warmth upon you. Or have you noticed that things grow where that light falls, and where it does not fall things are stunted and fruitless. So, taking all these things together, you say that you know that the sun is shining.

Very well, you ask me about a living Christ. Perhaps you have pressed me to know whether I have seen him. In one sense, no, I never have. But I have seen what he does. I do know that where things once were dark, I now see by a new illumination. There is morning where night once was. I know, too, the warmth of a Christian fellowship which could not be explained in any other way because, given their natural tendencies, men do not behave in that fashion. I have seen things grow in life under the warmth and light of Jesus Christ, which do not grow where he is not present. By these things I claim the right to believe in a living Christ. It isn't all of my belief, but it is enough to begin.

It is enough for any of us. If you really want to believe in him and to find the newness of life he offers, there is a starting point on the level of every man. You can see the love that has come from him. It is a place to begin.

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

Theodore P. Ferris, Trinity Church, Boston, Massachusetts

There are scores of people in church today, in this church and in churches all over the land, who, if they were asked to say what they thought about Easter, might say something like this. We always go to church on Easter Sunday, and we go because we want to go; we like to go, and we are always glad we went. We like the music and the flowers and the service, and there is something about Easter that speaks to something deep in us. We can't tell you exactly what it is, but it is there and it is real. Furthermore, we go because we are Christians, not very good ones perhaps, but we try to be Christians. We believe in Christ and in everything he stood for in the world. We cannot imagine a world without Christianity, and Easter is one of Christianity's great days. Therefore, we are in church on Easter.

But to be perfectly honest with you, the resurrection of Jesus we are not so sure about. We don't disbelieve it; we don't really know what to think about it. We want to believe in it; we do believe in it, officially, tentatively, provisionally. But we can't picture it; it doesn't fit easily into any of the normal patterns of our thought. We are not accustomed to the idea of a person dying and then coming back to life again; and we just hope and pray that the children don't ask us any questions about it.

As a matter of fact, they go on, we are a little uneasy on Easter. We have a feeling sometimes that it is not quite fair to join in the festivities and the celebration when we are not quite sure that we know exactly what it

is that is being celebrated.

This, perhaps, should be said by way of preface. There are two things you have to have before you approach any great mystery of life, whether it be the mystery of Christ rising from the dead, or the mystery of the sun rising in the sky in the morning. You have to have honesty and humility. You can't pretend to know or believe more than you really do. Before you make any headway in understanding either the ways of the sun in the sky or the ways of the Son of Righteousness rising from the dead, you have to face the fact of your own ignorance, your temperament, your disposition to be doubtful and skeptical; and then you have to get down on your knees, at least figuratively, in humility, before the great mystery and acknowledge the fact that you cannot expect to know everything that there is to know about it.

E. A. Robertson said one time, "I like to leave a poem with a fringe around it. In real poetry you find that something has been said, and yet you find also about it a sort of nimbus of what can't be said." If that is true about a poem, it is even more true of the great mysteries of life, including the mystery of the resurrection of Christ. There is a nimbus around it of what cannot be said.

I

It might clear the air in the very beginning to say this: the resurrection of Jesus did not mean that he resumed his previous life. None of the stories in the Gospels imply that Jesus was simply restored to the life he once knew, going back to the place where he had always lived to pursue the normal course and routine of the day, eating his meals and spending a certain number of hours in sleep, and then going about his work.

There is nothing in the Gospels that implies that he died and then came back and carried on "as usual." Of course, that is what we would secretly like because, in spite of the fact that life can be very difficult and painful at times, we cling to it desperately and, when death takes away from us someone we love, we would like to have it given back just as it was. There is not a shred of evidence in the New Testament that anything like that happened to Jesus. All that the stories say is that he appeared to some of his friends. His appearances were not always recognizable; sometimes they recognized him instantly, and sometimes they didn't recognize him for quite a while. The appearances were spasmodic and occasional; he did not linger with them for any length of time. He appeared suddenly and unexpectedly, by the shore of the lake, on a walk into the country, when they were gathered together in an upper room for prayer. And after a very short time the appearances stopped altogether. According to the Acts of the Apostles they continued for forty days, a conventional measure of time. But there are good reasons for supposing that they all occurred on that Sunday after the crucifixion.

They were enough, however, to convince his friends that death had not destroyed him. "Death hath no more dominion over him"—those were the words they used to express it. As you might imagine, it was not easy for them to describe these appearances to other people. It is not easy to describe a sunset to a person born blind, but there is no reason for the blind man to refuse to listen to his ecstatic friend try to describe what he sees. It wasn't easy for people who had seen Jesus after he died to describe it to people who had never heard of anything like it in their lives, let alone seen him themselves. And it is not easy for us to understand what they described, but there is no reason for us not to listen to them as they tried in their ecstacy to describe as well as they could the appearances that convinced them that death had no more dominion over him. If we discredit everything they say about his appearances after death, there is

no reason why we should believe what they say about his behavior before death.

II

But if these appearances were all there was to the resurrection, we could be quite sure that we would not be thinking about it today. It would have been forgotten long ago. The fact is that people who had never seen him, either before or after his resurrection, began to encounter him, not as a character in a book, the way a schoolboy encounters George Washington or Abraham Lincoln when he begins to study American history; not like that, at all. They began to encounter him as a real power in their lives.

In the earlier years of Christianity, when the city of Alexandria in North Africa was flourishing, there was an old man who was a devout believer. One day he was being tormented by a group of younger people whe were unbelievers, and they mocked him, made fun of him and ridiculed his religion. In their scorn, they hurled at him the question: "What miracles has your Christ shown?" And this is what the old man quietly said, "He wrought this miracle, that I should endure the injuries which you heap upon me without losing my tranquility of mind, and should be ready to endure even greater injuries for love of him, if you were to proceed to inflict them." You don't talk like that about a dead man whom you admire. You only talk like that about a life force that has somehow taken possession of you.

Let's come a little nearer home. A young clergyman wrote to Phillips Brooks one time toward the end of his life, and asked him if he could tell him the secret of his life. When Mr. Brooks answered the letter, of course he disclaimed any particular secret and, in his modesty, he said, "I know not how to answer this letter because I have no secret." Then he went on to say, "The last years have had a peace and fullness which there did not use to be. . . . I am sure that it is a deeper knowledge and truer love of Christ. . . . I cannot tell you how personal this grows to me. He is here. He knows me and I know him. It is no figure of speech. It is the realest thing in the world. And every day makes it realer. And one wonders with delight what it will grow to as the years go on." Again, a highly intelligent, magnificently cultivated man of the world doesn't write that about a man who died two thousand years ago and whom he is now remembering with reverence and awe. He writes that only about someone who has taken hold of him as a living power, and who exerts upon him the kind of influence that only a living reality can exert.

If you are in this frame of mind at all, and I am sure some of you are, and some of you aren't, you might ask me, Has this ever happened to you? Have you ever had such an encounter with Christ? Of course, I haven't had anything l i k e an experience of the intensity that these two men record, but I have had this experience. I have seen p e o p l e brought into this fellowship, into this Christian community, this Church, whose life was to all intents and purposes over, and I have seen those people raised from the dead. I know I didn't do it; I know none of the other clergy did it. When I see that happen, I know that there is Someone, however you want to describe him, alive, vital, full of energy, who himself being risen to a new life, can raise the dead.

III

But, of course, you may never have encountered him at all in this personal way and, if you haven't, then think of this. You can think of this perfectly objectively, just as you would think about some other item in the history of the world. Think of the fact that Jesus through all these years has never successfully been hidden, in spite of all the attempts that have been made to do it. I can only

say one or two things that may suggest the staggering fact I have in mind.

Jesus says, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." The world says, "Come to me and I will give you excitement." And we say, What chance has Jesus against a world like that? Nobody wants rest, but everybody thirsts for excitement. Of course, the world will win every time. And yet, the time comes, and we feel somehow that this is one of the times, when the excitement begins to burn out and lose its glamor, and weary-minded and weak-hearted and weak-spirited men begin to realize that they need a kind of rest that the world has never been able to give them, rest for their tired spirits and their broken hearts. You feel at a time like this as though the words of Jesus rose right up from the dead.

Jesus said, Blessed are the pure in heart, and the poor in spirit; blessed are the gentle, the burden-bearers, the mourners and the modest and, above all, the peacemakers. The world says, Blessed is the man who is satisfied with himself, the man who rules, who is rich, who is popular, who enjoys life. And you say to yourself, The Beatitudes are beaten right down into the ground by the wisdom of the world. But they always come up again, always. They always come up again; like the word "kindness."

Robert Nathan tells in one of his novels about a young writer who went to an older writer for advice. The older writer had grown cynical. He asked the young man why in the world he wanted to write anyway. The young man answered, "I think that I write in order to talk about what I love best in the world." The older man asked, "And what may that be?" The younger man hesitated and blushed. "It is kindness," he said in a low voice. The older man said, "What a strange word to find on anybody's lips these days. It is like a style in clothes which is no longer worn, or like a musty language no longer spoken. What can one do with such a word? It is an instrument which has lost its usefulness. At best it is a feeble virtue; it has had no part in history, for history is made by force. Nevertheless, it has a way of returning every now and then to the earth, when one least expects it. The military bands stop a moment for breath, the hunters pause to sleep . . . and there is kindness again, nestling stubbornly in people's hearts, lifting a small peaceful voice, ready for the millennium."

Jesus has a way of returning every now and then to the earth when you least expect it, for he cannot be hid. Sometimes he returns to a place where Negroes have been able to take violence without giving violence in return. And sometimes he returns to a place like Boston, in a church like this, where people bear unbearable handicaps and disabilities cheerfully, creatively, because of him.

IV

Several years ago I found a little poem in one of the daily papers, and I cut it out and put it away in my notebook under "resurrection." It is about a shadow. The poem, tells how the shadow is the extension of the man and how the man and the shadow make a team, a contract cancelled only, it would seem, when flesh no longer hangs upon his bones. And then it goes on to say this:

> Yet sometimes there is such a bond,
> the shadow being over-fond
> and proud to serve a man so great,
> it will not meekly abdicate,
> and though the man has ceased to be
> it draws his shape from memory
> upon the earth—thus dares to fall
> as if he had not died at all.

When I read that again this week, as I was getting ready for this sermon, it suddenly dawned upon me that, clever little poem as that is, it is a

perfect description of what the resurrection of Jesus is not! Jesus is not a shadow, but a real presence; invisible—like electricity; powerful—like electricity. Jesus is not "a shape drawn from memory on the earth." Jesus is a Person who draws near and goes with you on the way. It isn't so much that you remember him, as it is that he remembers you. And he does not "dare to fall upon the earth as if he had not died at all." The whole point is that he did die, brutally, cruelly, sublimely. And because he died, the way he died, he is alive!

WHEN BURNS THE HEART

Bishop Everett W. Palmer, The Methodist Church, Seattle, Washington

They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us on the road, while He opened to us the scriptures?" Luke 24-32

Two men trudge down a Roman road. The year is at Spring. It is a beautiful Sunday afternoon. The earth wears its brightest dress; the air is balmy, sweet as nectar; and overhead great white clouds stand serene in a blue sky, castles shaped by a giant's hand.

But the men have no eyes for the beauty of that Spring day. What they sense of it serves merely to deepen their pain. They have eyes only for their feet and the dust of the road. They are weighed down under discouragement, cloaked with gloom. With sagging shoulders and somber faces they make their way toward a village called Emmaus, some seven miles from Jerusalem.

Just the Sunday before they had been with the jubilant crowd which lined yet another road and shouted hosannas. They had believed Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. They had been among his followers.

Then followed the arrest, trial, public humiliation and the Cross. They had seen His disciples scattered. On that very morning, it being the third day since the crucifixion, M a r y Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James with other women had come in great excitement saying Christ was risen, but they could not believe it. They were sure His enemies had won, that death had conquered the Lord of Life.

"Yes," they say to themselves, "it was all a mistake, a tragic mistake. We should have known it couldn't be true. After all, the world's been the way it is for a long time and it was silly to think anything much can be done about it. You can't c h a n g e human nature."

So they go their dreary way. Their hearts are leaden. Death is in them. Then another Traveler, going their way, overtakes them. T h e y don't know Him. They are so wrapped in despair they scarcely glance at Him. They think He is a Stranger. But as He walks with them, they open their hearts and He comforts them, helping them understand t h r o u g h the Scriptures that what happened in those bitter days would mean not the end, but the beginning of Jesus and of His Kingdom among men.

The remaining miles of their journey seem surprisingly short. T h e y arrive at the village Emmaus and invite Him to share the evening meal. They sit together about the table and their Guest offers the prayer for blessing. Suddenly in a flash of insight, they recognize Him. They know He is the Risen Christ!

After He has gone they say to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" So they are cured of despair and loss of zeal. With burning hearts they go out to capture the world for Him.

In this ancient and beautiful story we see ourselves and the ways of God's mercy; we see the Church and the means of God's empowerment.

I

First, here we see how God lights the fire that burns away discouragement and gives the heart a song.

Each of us has his journey to Emmaus. We have cherished high hopes and helplessly watched them perish on some cross of fell circumstance. We have seen a cause loved as our own life trampled, crushed, and made a thing of shame. We have seen the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. We have seen slander succeed and the godly betrayed. We have known what thirty pieces of silver can buy. We have done our best and ended with naught but desolation. A future bright with promise suddenly has become a dread darkness. Of such, everyone knows something by way of personal experience.

Samuel Eliot Morrison's classic biography of Columbus tells of his repeated bouts with despair. His third voyage, for instance, brought the discovery of a new continent and a new people. He provided for Spain and the Catholic Faith a vast region extending from California and New Mexico on the north to the Straits of Magellan. He opened the door for Christianity's first era of expansion in a thousand years. He directed the expedition with such brilliance that not a ship was lost and not a battle fought against the Indians. Imagine his state of mind upon arriving home after such exploits to be scorned as a failure, placed in irons and thrown into jail! Again and again Columbus made such a journey to Emmaus.

Read the biographies and autobiographies of the great. Each you will note had to find his way, often times through some dark, dread night of despair. Each had his day for a journey to Emmaus. Even Christ knew the awful depths from which leaps unbidden the desperate cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me."

So we need not be surprised when we are faced with such a journey to Emmaus. It is our human lot. Would we be free to aspire? Then we must be free to fail. Would we rejoice in the rewards of love? Then we must risk unprotected the sword of betrayal. Would we enjoy the fulfillment of being God's child? Then we must suffer with Him the consequences of man's rebellion. Everyone has to deal with discouragement and despair. Everyone now and again starts on a journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus.

But we do not go alone, even though at first we feel most terribly alone. Someone overtakes us, Someone who understands our plight, for in His hands and feet are nail prints. Though at first we may not know Him as we ought, if we will make Him welcome and open our hearts to Him, He will minister to our need. Gradually in His company we gain larger understanding, better perspective; hope is restored, faith mended. Then our eyes are opened and we know Him. We know our Redeemer lives and is mighty to save. We know we are His and He is ours forever. Then gone our discouragement and vanquished our despair.

K. Morgan Edwards recently has called attention to a statement attributed to General Douglas Haig. On the darkest days of World War I, someone said to him, "I hope, sir, you are not too discouraged." "Discouraged?" responded the general, "A Christian has no right to be discouraged in the same world as God."

The other day newspapers carried the picture of a blind man who had regained his vision. Some time ago he had suffered a severe concussion in an auto accident. For a time he suffered blurred vision and then went totally blind. Doctors told him his sight was gone, permanently. At 24, newly-married, and beginning a career in business, he was blind. He

says it was like walking out into empty space. It was a journey toward Emmaus. But soon he learned he was not alone. Someone overtook him. Through faith in God at his side he found comfort and gained new courage. Supported by a loyal wife and aided by the Braille Institute in Los Angeles, he began to prepare himself for a useful life without eyesight.

A month ago he suffered a headache which lasted for two weeks. It got worse, but as it worsened he began to see shifting shadows and color combinations. Then, suddenly, he could see again. He phoned his wife and his minister and rushed to his doctor's office. He says, "I went yelping through the front door like a cyclone had hit the place."

But even more prized is the vision which came to his soul when his eyes were sightless. He says of his blindness, "I'm a better man for it. I've learned a lot of things are true that I thought were not true . . . I have gained a new sense of values. It's like not judging a book by its cover."

Each of us on occasion must start a journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus. At first we feel terribly alone. But Someone overtakes us. If we will make Him welcome He will warm and restore our wounded spirit; He will light a fire that burns away discouragement and gives the heart a song!

II

Second, in that report of a journey to Emmaus we see a mortal illness of the Church and the means of God's healing. We learn how God kindles the flame that burns away lethargy and restores vital life.

Those two men who trudged despondent toward Emmaus had lost their zeal for the cause of Christ. Things had not gone to their liking. Christ had refused to do what they had asked and expected. He would be the Word of God, not the echo of their words. He would be the Suffering Son of God for the salvation of the world; not the tool of Hebrew nationalism for the conquest of the w o r l d. Then the worst happened. Suddenly it seemed futile to be a Christian in earnest. They were in retreat and soon to be lost to the infant Church. The alien world had chilled their hearts.

There is no substitute for a warm and glowing heart. Without it we don't matter much, nothing we do matters much. We have to be captured by Something or Someone that awakens and challenges our powers, brings our desires into focus, and sets our hearts ablaze. Until that happens we are dead and don't know it.

This is true in any area of attainment. One of the greatest musicians of our time is a Spaniard in exile named Pablo Casals. His accomplishments as an interpreter of Bach and his mastery of the cello have won world renown. He has revolutionized cello playing. Fritz Kreisler called him "the best who draws the bow." Now eighty and suffering from failing health, the world still clamors for his genius. How did he b e c o m e the master that he is? It has been a love affair, they say. Through the years he has given himself in dedication and passion to his cello and great music, especially that of Bach. No one makes music the world wants to hear without a glowing heart.

We are of little value as Christians without a glowing heart. Remember the r e b u k e given Christians of Laodicea? They were residents of a great and prosperous city, a c i t y whose wealth made it indifferent to moral issues and the high call of righteousness. Evidently its m o r a l climate infected the Christians living there, for to them God directed this stern rebuke: "I know thy works, that thou are neither hot nor cold: I would that thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm . . . I will spew thee out of my mouth."

Lukewarmness for the t h i n g s of Christ is a disgrace to which we are tempted, we who live in a modern Laodicea. It is a temptation more

subtle and destructive than the rude happenings at Golgotha which once drove two men into retreat down a road toward Emmaus. Easily we become so much a citizen of Laodicea that we never let ourselves belong wholeheartedly to Christ. And when that is so, we are dead to Him and useless to His Church. Our religion is a dreariness, not a delight; frustration, not fulfillment; defeat, not victory. We are dead and don't know it. What is worse, not only do we miss the power and joy of Christianity, but we tend to make other people miss it, too.

Has the lure of Laodicea made us casual, half-hearted, lukewarm in our devotion to Christ? Are we on an Emmaus road of retreat, deserting Him who died for us? Then with the power and glory of Easter fresh upon us, may we open our eyes, and behold Him, and truly belong to Him?

Two men t r u d g e down a road known to each of us. Discouragement and loss of zeal for the cause of Christ have unmanned them. But Someone overtakes them. They make Him welcome. They open their hearts to Him. So, He kindles a flame that burns away despair and gives their heart a song; He lights the fire that burns away lethargy and gives the Church its vital life.

He walks at our side. May we make Him welcome; even open our hearts to Him.

THE LONG DAYS AFTER EASTER

Charles T. Holman, Hyde Park Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above. Col. 3:1

Last Sunday we celebrated Easter and the glorious triumph of life and goodness over death and evil. That is what makes Easter the most joyous of all Christian festivals. But what does all that mean for the long days after Easter?

The end of Lent and its imposed abstinences means, for many, release in wild exhilirations that have in them more sensuous—or even sensual—delight than Christian joy. Such a rebound is one possibility.

Or we may lapse back into the old routines, following old patterns of behavior, dragging along in the same old rut, just as if Easter had never come. The Apostle Paul thought that Easter should make a difference, as it did, indeed, for the early Christians. The Christian was expected mystically to share with Christ the experience of the resurrection, and the Apostle says, "If the Spirit of Him who raised up from the dead the Lord Jesus dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you." There should be no relapse into the old humdrum and perhaps sinful ways. A new power is available for a new life.

Or shall Easter mean for us, as it should, this new and triumphant life? "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above," says the Apostle in our text. For, as Paul over and over emphasizes, the resurrection is not just something that happened in the past. It is not just the story that Christ rose from the dead, but that He is risen, and lives on, and that we may live with Him in the power of His risen life.

What should this resurrection experience mean for us, specifically and practically? It should mean a radiant life. Principal Jacks once preached a sermon on "The Lost Radiance of the Christian Religion," and I should say that the chief difference between the life of the first Christians and that of most modern Christians is that Christianity glowed in those early days. Read the Book of Acts. After that first great revival at Pentecost we are told

of those early converts that "they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people." Little wonder, is it, that "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

"Lost radiance!" W. R. Maltbie said that "some people in church look like guests at a royal banquet who couldn't afford to be left out but who had been forbidden by their doctors to eat anything!" Dr. Luccock suggests that we contrast that with the lines of Robert Louis Stevenson,

> Away with funeral music—set
> The pipe to powerful lips—
> The cup of life's for him who drinks
> And not for him who sips!

If we don't get what we should out of our religion, radiance and joy, there is the trouble. We do not drink deeply of it; we sip at it; we do not give ourselves completely to it; we do not let the power of the risen Christ flow through us. We have too many reservations, too many parts of our lives into which Christ is not permitted to enter.

When Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men," He wasn't referring only to the gifts we bring for the collection, although we, quite properly I think, sometimes use these words for the offertory sentence. He meant, "Let your lives glow!" And there are people who do. Their religion lights them up. I remember once visiting Washington the day before a Shriners' Convention. The whole city was brilliantly illuminated. When I returned to Chicago I remarked on it to my colleague Dean Charles W. Gilkey. "The whole town was lit up," I told him. "Well," he replied, "if you had waited another day you would have seen a lot of Shriners lit up, too!" Well, possibly. But I am sure that we Christians ought to be as lit up as those early Christians were. "These men are not drunk," Peter said when some doubters thought their exhilaration and joy came from wine, but a fulfillment of prophecy, "I will pour out my Spirit." Let us be sure of it, that radiance will be restored when "the Spirit of Him who raised up Christ from the dead dwells in you."

And it should be a powerful life. That is a great concept of the Apostle that the same power—the very same power—that was in Christ when God raised Him from the dead should quicken also our mortal bodies. That same almighty power of God is available to us to live our lives triumphantly. I have visited Niagara Falls scores of times. It is an overwhelming experience to stand there and watch those mighty torrents, with their vast power, pouring over the cliffs. Only a small fraction of that power has been harnessed, yet it lights great cities in the United States and Canada, drives the trolley busses in many cities, provides power for great factories. But that isn't all. That same power lights small cottages and drives the housewife's vacuum sweeper and sewing machine. So it is with the inexhaustible power of God. That same power that raised up Christ from the dead will enable one man to keep his temper, another to control the wild tempestuous drive of passion, another to overcome his selfishness and live in brotherly love, and it has empowered many a saint to march with courage to a martyr's death. The risen life can and should be a powerful life.

After Easter—what? Don't let us get back into the doldrums of life. Let us know Christ and the power of His resurrection. This is not to narrow life down; it is to lift it up to new heights of triumph and joy, of radiance and power. It is to live victoriously. Let us put heart and muscle into it. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek — earnestly seek — those things which are above."

FOLLOWING EASTER—WHAT?

R. A. Young, First Methodist Church, Gardena, California

"Aggressor," as applied to individuals or nations, aptly describes the thought and action of our generation and great thoughts, whether true or false, still rule the world.

Lincoln, Washington, and Jesus Christ are three symbols of greatness. These names are fresh in our minds, for we have recently celebrated the birthdays of the two great Americans and at Easter we again emphasized the claims of Christ. We have been stirred through the years by the two who have held the ideal of freedom before us, and by Christ who has brought to us redemption.

Grandeur of character lies wholly in the force of the soul and in moral and spiritual principles of love. The greatest individual is he who chooses the right with invincible resolution, who bears the heaviest burdens cheerfully, who remains calm in the storms and fearless under wicked attack, and whose reliance is on truth, virtue, and God.

Wicked aggressors are clever, alert, and shrewd. They lay their plans carefully with vision, and e x e c u t e them with vigor and precision. This age cannot soon forget the examples of Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, and others.

Here is a frank question: Why should not America adopt a militant and intelligent policy of aggression for Americanism and an aggressiveness for virtue, human dignity, and freedom? Why does not the Christian Church become an aggressor for personal righteousness and Christ-like living? When will we relearn the art of righteous aggression and live it out with faith and courage as did our forefathers?

We ministers not only need the mind of Christ, but we need his Passion. We must recapture the soul compassion of Christ. There can be no great moral and spiritual awakening for our age without aggression and without a passion that takes us beyond the superficiality of average living. We need a return in our day to a deep and wonderful glow of reality in religious experience. Resurrection means new life. Without the resurrection life, the Passion itself would have been robbed of meaning. Our call is to be aggressors! Without this motivation, the whole Christian structure falls to pieces and the glorious atonement becomes a vanity of vanities.

The Easter Life may give to Christendom the t r u e art of righteous aggression, which we know as evangelism. Any haziness or hesitation concerning our Christian faith is fatal. We must believe, commit, and promote—or we die.

The voice of the Old Testament and of the New has the same challenging question: "Who is a God like unto Thee?" (Micah 7:18). Christ is truly risen for us if we can recapture this faith. It will revitalize millions of Christians into aggressors for world peace and world freedom—and for all individuals it will bring a personal redemption.

The Risen Christ and His gospel are adequate. Let us proclaim Him and be personally adequate in Him. His gospel is adequate to deal with the evil that is in the human heart and society. His power strikes a death blow to sin. His gospel is adequate to reinstate God into human life. With St. Paul let us proclaim, "I am proud of His gospel."

Our great need is a new explosive thrust of a new affection. We need to read and listen to Isaiah speak of the holiness of God, who is power, personal and approachable; of God's righteousness; of man's hope of redemption from sin; yes, and of the ultimate triumph of God's righteousness. What God has wrought in the past He can do again. Aggressors, motivated with confidence in the

eternal purpose of God made known to us in His Son, are the answer.

Have our modern pulpits lost their capacity for moral indignation? Has it become bad form to manifest warmth of feeling? Lukewarmness is our peril. Whatever else we are called to be or do, we are called to be "aggressors" of a Risen Christ and His redemption.

A LENTEN EASTER SAMPLER from page 2

fulness is conquered by generosity. When He enters a city in triumph all arrogance, racial animosity, and class pride will be done away. It will mean emancipation and power and the healing of broken hearts; business will be done for the glory of God . . . Men will say, "Today is the Kingdom of God come among us." It will come when He has made Triumphal Entry into human hearts, one by one.

Carl R. Simon

* * * *

The older I grow the more I ponder Judas Iscariot. He came so near to not betraying Jesus. He was a loyal disciple. It took courage to join that little band, and Judas had it. Then doubts began. What kind of Messiah was this who refused violent revolution and talked about loving one's enemies? Was not this idealistic Jesus letting them down? So the doubts grew, until in an explosive hour—oh, fifty-one votes against forty-nine—Judas sold his Lord. He came so near not doing it, that when he saw what he had done he hanged himself in shame. Ah, Judas, if you had only doubted your doubts enough to wait until Easter, until Pentecost, until Paul came, you would not be the supreme traitor of the centuries. You stood in the presence of divine greatness, and you disbelieved.

Harry Emerson Fosdick

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One of the most interesting variant readings in the entire New Testament is found in Origen and in the Jerusalem and Syriac cursive manuscripts where the full name of Barabbas is given—"Jesus Barabbas." "Jesus," or "Joshua," was a relatively common Hebrew name, meaning deliverer or savior. It is perfectly evident why the variant reading was not generally accepted. According to the rules of textual criticism, the difficult readings are probably correct. This gives ground for believing that the crowd was faced with an interesting choice, "Will you have Jesus Barabbas or Jesus the Christ?"

Hillyer H. Straton

* * * *

On Good Friday, 1500 years ago, Bishop Ambrose ascended his pulpit in the Cathedral of Milan and addressed his congregation in the following words: "I find it impossible to speak to you today. The events of Good Friday are too great for human words. Why should I speak while my Saviour is silent and dies?" Every preacher of the Cross has had this experience, especially when he compares the weakness of his own words with the majesty and power of the seven short sentences which our Lord spoke in the six hours from nine o'clock in the morning until three o'clock in the afternoon. With these seven words we enter the Holy of Holies of the plans of God for men.

O. P. Kretzmann

* * * *

In some moods—the mood, for example, in which I find myself on each Good Friday morning—one feels it almost a sacrilege to argue and to discuss. One desires then only to bow in adoration before the mystery of a love whose depths no one can sound and the range of whose august purposes is like that of a shooting star. It sweeps in from the Infinite and the Unknown, and comes near enough to earth so that we may see something of its shining glory. We watch with awe and wonder; but when all that can be seen by human eyes has passed

into the darkness, and a cry is heard, "It is finished," we still know that a purpose goes on, beyond our vision, in the Infinite and the Unknown, and we cannot even imagine its scope or guess at its goal.

Leslie D. Weatherhead

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When Jesus uttered the words, "It is finished!" He did so as a ship's commander might utter them to his first officer as a perilous voyage through dark and menacing seas ended in a friendly harbor. One glad exultant word in His native tongue sprang to His lips: "Finished!" "Accomplished!" His life perfected, His mission was fulfilled. History confirms the verdict. "He will never be surpassed," said Renan. "Higher has human thought not reached," mused Carlyle. Before the perfection of His personality it is absurd to speak of still fuller perfection. When a perfect chord in music is played, do we expect to hear a more perfect chord? Is not Christ, to use Robert Browning's phrase, "the C Major of this life"? On the Cross, His character, His life, His disclosure of God were perfected, brought to a successful issue. Our fathers dwelt lovingly on this thought. They spoke frequently of the "finished work of the Redeemer."

David Alexander MacLennan

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Were you there when they crucified my Lord? I was there. I can see myself in each of the actors in that drama. I was there in Caiaphas who would save the nation by letting Jesus perish. I was there in Nicodemus who would not risk his position in the Sanhedrin for Jesus' sake. I was there in Peter who loved but was unprepared. I was there in Judas who followed, but sought to bend Jesus to his own ends. I was there in Herod who did not care. I was there in Pilate who was afraid. I was there among the fickle crowd. I was one of the soldiers who simply did his duty. I know I am guilty of his death.

Daniel T. Niles

An impressive picture of Calvary can be seen in the National Gallery in London. Christ is on the cross, almost hidden in the darkness. At first the one who looks observes nothing but the blackness and through it the dim figure of the suffering Christ. But if his gaze does not falter, he glimpses a figure with arms outstretched, tenderly holding up the suffering one. His face is twisted by a pain which is more agonizing even than that of Christ. God the Father is grieving with his Son as he hangs on the cross.

G. Ernest Thomas

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If men are to be effectually brought to repentance and reconciled to God, these things at least need to be stabbed into their consciousness: the moral loathsomeness of sin; the Divine holiness that inevitably condemns it; the outreaching Love that forgives it and restores; and the perfect human obedience that has been and can be rendered. The Cross of Christ is unique as a moral dynamic because it fills all these needs.

Edward Grubb

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The atonement is never understood on the Christian level if it stops with any "moral influence" theory. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, but not chiefly by giving us a light and a way. He gave us light by Life; He died to give us power for salvation. By accepting the fullness of the Love of God from Him who eternally is God, there came to be a union of God and man whereby a whole new stream of redemption was opened for man. This stream first came out of eternity; in history ever since the beginning of humanity the stream of grace had been making its hard and costly way against the stream of original sin. On Calvary the flood of grace broke through and became fully and openly available for man.

Nels F. S. Ferre

It is almost impossible to overemphasize the importance of the Cross. It is at the very heart of our religion. It presents an issue with which every Christian must deal. It is not a mere academic or theological question; it has to do with life itself. The more one studies it, the greater it grows.

In his old age, Tintoretto, the famous Venetian painter, asked to be taken once again to the seaside. He wanted to look upon the Adriatic another time. As his vision swept over the rolling waves, he exclaimed: "The sea always grows greater."

It is that way with the Cross. Its deeper meaning grows on us all the time.

G. Ray Jordan

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The denying ourselves, and the taking up our cross, in the full extent of the expression, is not a thing of small concern: it is not expedient only, as are some of the circumstantials of religion; but it is absolutely, indispensably necessary, either to our becoming or continuing His disciples. It is absolutely necessary, in the very nature of the thing, to our coming after Him, and following Him; insomuch that, as far as we do not practice it, we are not His disciples. If we do not continually deny ourselves, we do not learn of Him, but of other masters. If we do not take up our cross daily, we do not come after Him, but after the world, or the prince of the world, or our own fleshly mind. If we are not walking in the way of the cross, we are not following Him; we are not treading in His steps; but going back from, or at least wide of, Him.

John Wesley

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In the movie **The Life of Zola** there is a remarkable court scene. Zola was battling to reopen the Dreyfus affair, but his evidence was not admitted and his witnesses were not allowed to testify. Finally the judge declared that it was a closed case. As they were leaving the courtroom, Zola's lawyer pointed to a mural above the judge's head. It was a painting of the Crucifixion. The lawyer said, "That, too, was once regarded as 'a closed case.'"

That "closed case" of nineteen centuries ago was opened by the hand of the Eternal. God manifested his limitless power in the resurrection of his Son, who stepped forth from the shadows of the tomb in the power of an endless life. The disciples became new men. C o w a r d s were changed into heroes; pygmies became giants; broken reeds pillars of iron.

John Sutherland Bonnell

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Our chief concern on any Easter day is not so much that we should have unmistakable proof of our immortality, or of the resurrection of Jesus, but our question ought to be, what difference does belief in immortality make to us in our everyday life? After all, we are not angels. We are living in a world of tragedy. We are human beings with all the limitations that our humanness implies; we are living in a world where good is, and where evil threatens us on every hand. We could get out of the world by means of suicide. But most of us do not want to do that, we prefer to live. And so long as we prefer to live, we seek a means whereby we can make the human spirit triumph over all the forces set to defeat it. It is not so much a question as to whether we can believe in miraculous events, but rather whether we can believe in a moral miracle which can happen within us to lift us above the exigencies of life and to inspire others with the same belief.

Frederick K. Stamm